



The Human Services Workforce Initiative

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Results of the Lowcountry ABC Youth Director Survey: Highlights, “Community”

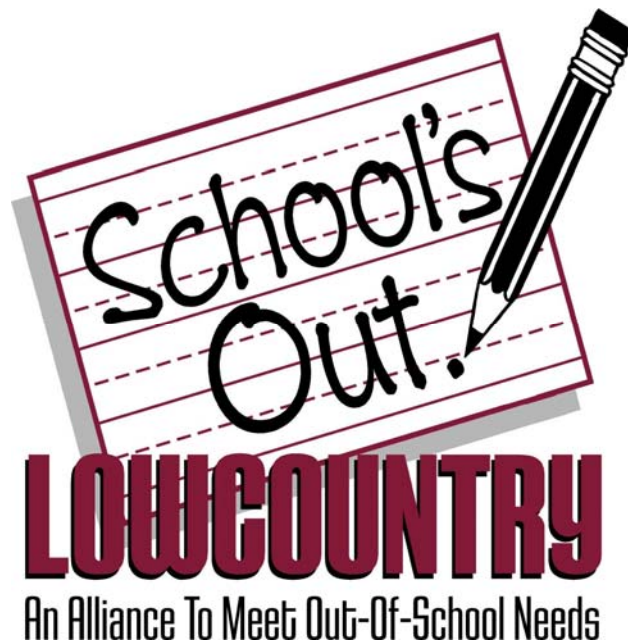


Prepared by
Community Foundation of the Lowcountry for Cornerstones for Kids

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The Results of the Lowcountry ABC Youth Director Survey: Highlights

A report to the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry



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Cornerstones For Kids Introduction

The Human Services Workforce Initiative (HSWI) is focused on the frontline workers serving vulnerable children and families. HSWI's premise is that human services matter. Delivered well, they can, and do, positively impact the lives of vulnerable children and families, often at critical points in their lives.

We believe that the quality of the frontline worker influences the effectiveness of services they deliver to children and families. If workers are well-trained and supported, have access to the resources that they need, possess a reasonable workload, and are valued by their employers, it follows that they will be able to effectively perform their jobs. If, however, they are as vulnerable as the children and families that they serve, they will be ineffective in improving outcomes for children and families.

Unfortunately, all indications today are that our frontline human services workforce is struggling. In some instances poor compensation contributes to excessive turnover; in others an unreasonable workload and endless paperwork render otherwise capable staff ineffective; and keeping morale up is difficult in the human services fields. It is remarkable that so many human services professionals stick to it, year after year.

HSWI's mission is to work with others to raise the visibility of, and sense of urgency about, workforce issues. Through a series of publications and other communications efforts we hope to

- Call greater attention to workforce issues
- Help to describe and define the status of the human services workforce
- Disseminate data on current conditions
- Highlight best and promising practices
- Suggest systemic and policy actions that can make a deep, long-term difference

This report provides a snapshot of the characteristics of directors and programs serving children and youth in the Lowcountry of South Carolina during out-of-school time. Using a survey developed by the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition to determine the characteristics of the youth workforce, the supports that are provided to workers, and changes that might improve their employment experiences and increase the stability of the workforce overall, these results supplement the findings of the larger survey and add to our knowledge of this group of child-serving professionals in largely rural areas.

Additional information on the human services workforce, and on HSWI, is available at www.cornerstones4kids.org.

Cornerstones For Kids
2007

I. Introduction

In 2005, the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry received a grant from Cornerstones For Kids to conduct the ABC Youth Director Survey in the Lowcountry of South Carolina. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Cornerstones For Kids. This report summarizes some of the data from the survey collected through the end of February 2007.

II. Project Design and Methods

Instrument Development The ABC Surveys, a frontline youth worker survey and a youth director survey, were developed in 2004 by the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition (Next Gen) to determine what the youth workforce is like, how these workers are supported, and what might be done to improve their employment experiences and to increase the stability of the workforce overall. Next Gen used the BEST Network¹ sites as the major source from which to collect data from youth workers and directors. In early 2005, the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry (Foundation) was invited by Cornerstones For Kids to use the ABC Youth Director and ABC Youth Worker surveys with workers and directors in the Lowcountry.²

Population Identification Beginning in April 2006, a database of programs was developed by merging lists created through two previous evaluation studies and adding additional types of agencies that typically are involved in providing out-of-school programs for school-aged children and youth. When completed, the database included 258 organizations that provide out-of-school programs either currently or in the past in the four counties.

The database identified 136 organizations in Beaufort County, 49 in Colleton, 25 in Jasper, and 48 in Hampton as having active programs or a total of 258 programs operating in 2006. Fifty-eight of these stopped operating sometime during 2006 due to lack of funding. Therefore, the closest estimate of the number of organizations providing out-of-school youth programs in the Lowcountry as of the end of February 2007 is 200. Where an organization has multiple sites, we counted sites individually when they were separately incorporated (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs); we counted them as one organization when they were not separately incorporated (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters and Girl and Boy Scouts). While out-of-school programming is very fluid with many programs starting and terminating each year, 200 is a good estimate of the size of the population of youth directors in the region.

Methodology. Fifty-eight youth directors from Beaufort, Colleton, Jasper, and Hampton Counties completed the survey between April 2006 and February 2007. They represent 29 percent of the estimated total, an excellent rate of response for surveys of this type. These youth directors were from 52 separate organizations that operated out-of-school programs as part of their service package. The Boys and Girls Club of the Lowcountry has unit directors in each county, plus a regional director and an outreach rural club director. While BGC incorporates each of its county clubs as a separate 501c3 operation, we counted them as one organization in the total of 52 separate organizations. In addition, programs such as the 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts have only been counted once, even though there are numerous individual clubs found throughout the counties. For some questions in order to get an accurate estimate of the number of children served

and number of staff, we deleted responses from individual programs within larger organizations and counted only responses from the larger entity when the response included the individual units.

The Lowcountry ABC Youth Director Survey was placed on the web. Directors of out-of-school programs for children and youth were contacted and asked if they would be willing to complete the survey. Directors were given the option of receiving a hard copy of the survey to complete or completing the survey online. The survey was also accessible on the Foundation's website and by contacting Dr. Wilson Robinson at Clemson University. Hard copies of the surveys were also disseminated at three Advancing Youth Development training sessions held during the period of data collection. Two hundred and ninety phone calls were made to all known directors of out-of-school programs for school-aged children and youth in the Lowcountry to invite them personally to participate in the survey and to explain why it was being conducted and how the results would be used.

The survey did not ask for names of individuals or organizations, but we were able to determine which organizations were involved by the email address found on most of the completed online surveys. However, we did not attempt to link names with responses other than to determine the number of separate organizations whose directors completed the survey.

Youth directors in some organizations may have felt compelled to complete the survey in order to qualify the organization for funding from the Foundation. When the survey was first issued, the Foundation had not yet issued its RFP for funding of out-of-school programs. In late 2006, the RFP was publicly announced with the provision that only organizations having sent at least one youth worker and one director to the appropriate AYD training and having completed the ABC Youth Director Survey were eligible to apply for funding. Twenty directors completed the survey once the requirement was announced.

The youth directors who responded to the survey are from larger and nationally affiliated organizations for the most part. In social capital terms, they are more involved in building bridges with other organizations and know it is important to network. Many out-of-school program directors in the Lowcountry work in isolation and lack fax machines, answering machines, or computers. A surprising number do not return phone calls even when they have an answering machine. Thus, we could involve only those youth directors who could be contacted and who saw the value in establishing the data collected by the survey.

III. The Youth Work Logic Model

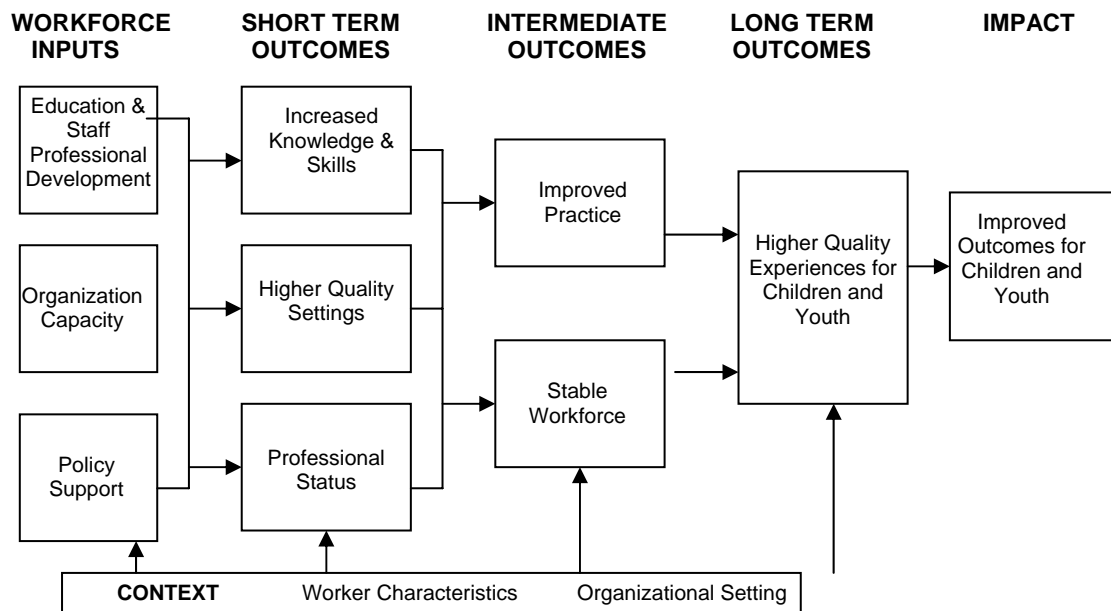
The ABC Youth Director Survey explored some of important questions about the workforce. The figure below is the conceptual model behind the survey, which was developed for the Next Gen Coalition by Harvard's Family Research Project, headed by Heather Weiss.³ The framework conceptually identifies the relationships thought to contribute to achieving positive developmental outcomes in children and youth. A major assumption is that a "high-performing workforce (stable, satisfied, supported, and competent), influences program effectiveness and that there is a link between effective programming and positive youth outcomes." While few studies have demonstrated the associational links between workforce supports and youth outcomes, the Next Gen Coalition's work is based on the assumption that "strengthening and supporting workers is important both for workers' sake and because it is critical to improving outcomes for youth."

The logic model suggests that youth workers are part of the capital needed to build positive youth outcomes. It also suggests that organizational dynamics directly affect the status of the workforce,

as well as program quality and ultimately youth outcomes. While the Coalition members recognized a different kind of investigation would have to be done to effectively measure workforce status, the ABC survey does assess directors' satisfaction and the extent to which they feel supported and feel that supervision and feedback are adequate.

The Harvard model leaves the contextual factors relatively undefined. In the case of the Lowcountry, these contextual factors loom large because of how rural the setting is.

Logic Model



From Heather Weiss and Lisa Klein. (2006). *Changing the Conversation about Workforce Development: The Links Between Workforce Development and Children and Youth Outcomes*. A presentation at the September 2006 Cornerstone For Kids Human Services Workforce Initiative meeting, Washington D.C.

IV. Highlights from the Youth Director Survey Findings

A summary of findings from the Youth Director Survey is presented in this section. A more detailed report of findings can be obtained from Dr. Robinson (Wilson5@Clemson.edu). The detailed report reviews all data. This report highlights some major findings and does not discuss the implications of the survey results for building the workforce and profession in the Lowcountry.

1. Youth Director/Supervisor Demographics

Age and Gender: The survey population is largely female (75.6 percent), and 60 percent are 45 years of age or older with the median age between 45 and 49. Not surprisingly, the percentage of

men in supervisory ranks (24.4 percent) is larger than the percentage found in the frontline workforce in the youth worker survey.

Race/Ethnicity and Native Language: The survey population is 52.3 percent Caucasian and 47.7 percent African-American. While there is a growing Hispanic population in the Lowcountry, it remains small and varies widely, from 1.9 percent in Colleton County to 10 percent in Jasper. Thus, survey respondents represent well the majority of the Lowcountry population but don't represent newly emerging minority groups in the area as well. All respondents are native English speakers, but 6.7 percent indicate they need to use another language to fulfill their work responsibilities.

Perceived Similarity to Frontline Youth Workers: Seventy-two percent of survey respondents indicate they are either very similar or somewhat similar to their frontline youth workers, while 27.9 percent indicate they are somewhat or very different from their frontline workers. The question asked only about perceived similarity or difference; it did not specify the basis for comparison.

Educational Backgrounds: The educational background of the youth directors is high: 86.3 percent of the respondents have a college degree or higher. Those supervising out-of-school programs in community-based settings are on average less educated than those found in school-based, faith-based, or nationally affiliated nonprofits.

Jobs Held Prior to Current Youth Work Supervisory Job: All respondents listed three or more jobs from different sectors prior to their current job. While the mix of jobs held varied greatly from respondent to respondent, 60 percent of the directors surveyed indicated they had held a job in education at one time, 37.8 percent in child care, 33.3 percent in faith-based organizations, 20 percent in finance, 13.3 percent in military, and 13.3 percent in health care. Some of the previous work experiences are closely aligned to youth work, and others are not.

2. Organizational Characteristics

Types of Organizational Settings With Which They Are Affiliated: Respondents tended to answer this question inconsistently. Some respondents were known to be affiliated with national nonprofits but ran their programs out of schools and therefore marked "school" for this question. For the most part, responses indicated where the program resides rather than the type of organization it is, except for those that marked "affiliate of national nonprofit." Out-of-school programs for children and youth are found in a variety of different types of organizations in the Lowcountry. One-third are located within schools, although not all of these are run by personnel from the school. Twenty-eight percent are affiliated with a national nonprofit, some operating in their own buildings and others in schools, churches or other public facilities. Nearly 16 percent are operated by faith-based organizations, which are all churches in this sample.

Primary Income Group Served: Low-income children and youth are the largest group served by these respondents. Over 73 percent of directors reported that their programs serve predominantly low-income children. Another 18.9 percent reported serving predominantly middle-income children.

Ages Served By Program: Unlike the youth worker survey, which asked for the age range most served, the youth directors were asked to identify all of the age ranges they serve in their programs. Nearly 72 percent of the respondents serve elementary school-aged children; 75.5 percent serve middle school-age children/teens; 56.6 percent serve high school-aged teens. Many

of the respondents serve a broad range of ages from elementary school through high school age. Nearly 21 percent also serve young adults over age 18 in their programs. Since the drop out rates are extremely high in these counties and over half of students who drop out of school complete GEDs, it is not surprising that so many programs are serving young adults, who come for tutoring for the GED, in addition to serving school-aged children and/or youth.

Type Of Program Activities Offered: All youth directors indicated they offer a variety of different types of program activities with 78.6 percent indicating they offer academic support/homework assistance or tutoring activities, 71.4 percent offering educational enrichment activities, and 64.4 percent offering arts and cultural enrichment activities. Sports and physical fitness/recreation activities are offered by 67.9 percent of the programs surveyed. Leadership training/development activities are offered by 60.7 percent. Community service learning activities are provided by 58.9 percent, and health/wellness activities are offered by 58.9 percent.

When Services Are Offered: Most respondents indicated they offer program services at three or more different times: 88.7 percent provide programs after school is over; 77.4 percent offer summer programs; 49.1 percent offer programs in the evening hours; 35.8 percent offer activities on the weekends; and 22.6 percent offer programs before school.

Number of Children/Youth Served Annually: The Youth Director survey provides an estimate of how many school-aged children and/or youth are served by the respondents' organizations. The survey offered ranges of children/youth served, so our figures are approximations. Between 18,987 and 25,194 children/youth are served by the 52 organizations whose directors responded to the survey. Faith-based and community-based program directors indicated that they serve fewer youth annually than do the nationally affiliated programs. Generally, FBOs and CBOs are serving 200 or fewer children annually while the nationally affiliated organizations and those operating from schools are reaching larger numbers.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 36,421 children ages 5 through 17 in the four counties.⁴ The children and youth served by the programs represented in our survey include 52.1 to 69.2 percent of the total population. We have no way of knowing whether some children/youth are attending more than one of these programs; there is very likely to be some overlap, but we do not know how much. We are told by youth directors that there are "large" groups of children and youth who do not attend any after-school or out-of-school program at all. They also tell us that there are many out-of-school learning opportunities near the towns of Beaufort, Hilton Head, and Bluffton, but further from these three towns fewer programs are available.

Licenses or Accreditations the Organization Maintains: Respondents indicated that 40.9 percent of their organizations are licensed child care centers, 36.4 percent are supplemental services providers under Title 1, 40.9 percent hold American Red Cross HIV/AIDS certification and training, Southern Association of Accredited Schools accreditations, after-school and summer camp-ABC Program licenses, and certifications issued by their national affiliate organizations.

Connection to Larger Networks: Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated that their organizations are affiliated with larger local, state, or national networks of similar youth-serving organizations/programs while 34 percent are not. Most of the 34 percent of respondents not networked are from faith-based and community-based organizations.

Annual Budgets: Nearly 42 percent of respondents (n = 48; five additional organizations were included within the figures provided by the regional program director of the parent organization) indicated that their programs have annual budgets that range between \$100 and \$50,000. One-

quarter of the programs have budgets ranging between \$50,001 and \$500,000. Just over one-third indicated they have budgets ranging between \$501,000 to over \$1 million.

3. Staffing, Wages and Benefits

Numbers of Staff Working During Summer Months: Forty-four directors/supervisors (75.8 percent) provided information on the summer workforce. The survey requested information on the frontline workforce and volunteer workforce as an exact number up to 39 workers and a range of 40 or more workers. Therefore, the totals for these two types of workers are an estimated range. At least 1,004 individuals work in some capacity in these out-of-school programs during the summer months. Respondents indicated they have a total of 78 management staff, 52 supervisory staff, a minimum of 445 frontline youth workers,⁵ 60 clerical staff, a minimum of 335 volunteers, and 34 “other” types of staff working in the summer.

Number of Staff Working During the School Year: Forty-five respondents provided information on the size of the workforce during the school year. At least 1,241 individuals work in some capacity in the respondents’ out-of-school programs: 81 management staff, 59 supervisory staff, a minimum of 484 frontline youth workers, 101 clerical staff, a minimum of 455 volunteers, and 61 “other” types of staff.⁶

Full-Time Employed Staff: Of the 44 directors responding, 18.2 percent indicated they have no full-time staff, while another 36.4 percent have between one and four full-time staff members. Just over 11 percent of respondents have between five and 10 full-time staff, while another 18.2 percent have between 11 and 30 full-time staff. Nearly 7 percent of the respondents have 31 to 40 full-time staff members, and 9.1 percent have over 40 full-time staff.

Number of Part-Time Staff: Nearly one-third of the 42 respondents indicated that they have no part-time staff, defined as those employed 30 hours/week or less. Nearly one-quarter indicated they have between one and four part-time staff, while 14.3 percent have five to 10 staff employed part time. Nearly one-quarter have 11 to 30 part-time staff, while 7.1 percent indicated over 40 part-time employees.

Salaries of Full-Time and Part-Time Staff: Over half of the full-time and part-time staff are unpaid staff members who receive no wage but may receive some form of benefits, such as paid professional development training, scholarships to attend higher education classes, medical insurance, annuity payments, and even credit toward retirement years or months. Wages of salaried individuals who work full-time vary a lot, from five who earn under \$20,000 to five with wages over \$45,000/year. The majority (26) earn between these two extremes. Community-based and faith-based organizations pay lower wages than school-based and nationally affiliated nonprofits. A review of the numbers of full-time and part-time staff in various wage categories is found in the full report.

Numbers of Work-Study Students, Interns or Service Corps Members Involved: Overall, this group of respondents does not use these types of workers much, if at all. All respondents indicated they do not use work-study students in the summer, while only 15 percent use them during the school year. Nearly one-third use college interns during the summer, while 38 percent use college interns during the school year. College interns in this instance are unpaid “volunteers connected to course work.” Nearly 20 percent use high school interns who volunteer in connection with course work during the summer, while 33 percent use high school students during the school year. All respondents reported they do not use service corps members (such as Americorps) during the summer, while 7 percent indicate using service corps members during the

school year. Just over one-quarter indicated using some other type of worker. A full summary of the number of each type employed in the programs is found in the full report.

Sources That Set Standards for Staff Qualifications: Just over 72 percent of respondents indicated they are affiliated with funding sources or accrediting bodies that require certain levels of staff qualifications.

Benefits for Full-Time Staff: Over 73 percent of the respondents indicated their organizations provide medical insurance for staff, while 64.4 percent indicated they provide life insurance, paid vacation time, paid sick leave, and/or paid holidays. Over 62 percent of the respondents indicated their organizations provide a retirement benefit.

Top Challenges In Recruiting Qualified Frontline Workers: The top challenge faced in recruiting high quality frontline youth workers is evenly divided between two issues: finding qualified applicants (27.3 percent) and being able to provide a compensation package that is competitive (27.3 percent). Closely following these two challenges is funding uncertainty (20.5 percent). When respondents were asked what their second greatest challenge was, the two top choices were listed most frequently again: finding qualified applicants (31.7 percent) and compensation not being competitive (26.8 percent).

4. Professional Development

Type of Professional Development Experience Provided by Organization: The most frequently mentioned professional development experience that the organizations represented by these respondents provide is regular staff meetings (88 percent), followed by supervisory training in program management and staff supervision (83 percent). Eighty percent of respondents' organizations offer opportunities for frontline staff to participate in trainings led by outside agencies, while 79 percent indicated that internal trainings for frontline staff, beyond orientation are provided.

The Top Factors That Would Most Advance Youth Work As A Profession: The change most likely to advance youth work as a profession mentioned most frequently by respondents was raising overall compensation/wages (74.4 percent). Other frequently mentioned changes were increasing program resources (39.5 percent), providing clear pathways for career advancement (32.6 percent), and providing more/better professional development opportunities (27.9 percent).

Top Factors Influencing Youth Directors' Decision To Remain In Youth Work: The factor that most influenced the directors' decision to remain in the field is "a sense that their job is making a difference" (34.9 percent). Asked to identify the next most influential factor, directors named pay rates most frequently (41.9 percent).

Top Factors Influencing Youth Directors' Decision To Leave Youth Work: The factor that most influenced the directors' decision to leave the field is the level of stress associated with the work (29.5 percent). Asked to identify the next most influential factor, directors named pay rates most frequently (35 percent).

V. Implications

The survey identified three types of out-of-school program director. One is better educated, employed in school-based or nationally-affiliated organizations with certification and licensing requirements, working full-time, better compensated, and has been working within the field six or

more years. A second workforce is well educated, retired, older, experienced in three or more jobs related to the field of youth work; some of this category of directors are compensated and some are not. The third type of director is relatively well educated, younger, less sure whether she will stay in the field, struggling with compensation issues, feeling less recognized, and needs to know she is making a difference. Ten implications of the survey findings are discussed in the full report. They include 1) providing meaningful retention incentives for the three distinctly different youth director profiles; 2) providing in-depth professional development experiences to more highly educated, experienced youth directors, as well as offering a lattice of greater depth of learning connected to certifications, associate degrees, and bachelor through doctorate formal education; 3) providing technical assistance to build the organizational capacity of the boards and directors of these nonprofits; 4) providing a strategy for increasing compensation, retention, and recognition of the youth directors; 5) encouraging greater diversity at the supervisory level so that supervisors better match the racial and ethnic profiles of the children/youth and youth workers they serve; 6) providing supervisors who have entered youth work from educational and work backgrounds not directly related to child and youth development and nonprofit management with special forums for learning; 7) providing consultation to organizations that are offering programs that attempt to serve children/youth in kindergarten through high school, which are a challenge even for the most qualified staff; 8) providing suggestions for building a financial base to support the out-of-school youth programming in the Lowcountry; 9) suggesting a few policy change strategies; and 10) suggesting ways of tackling the lack of sustainability of school-based after-school programs that are funded for a period of time by 21st Century Learning Center funds and then terminate right after funding ends.

End Notes

¹ The Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers, or National BEST, Initiative is an effort to build local and national programs to train youth workers. It is part of the National Training Institute for Community Youth Workers of the Academy for Educational Development. Information is available at <http://nti.aed.org/index.html>.

² “Lowcountry” is a local term identifying four counties in the Southeastern tip of South Carolina—Beaufort, Colleton, Jasper, and Hampton. Results of the workers’ survey are available at www.clemson.edu/ifnl, go to Publications.

³ Harvard Research Project. (Winter 2005/2006). “Pathways from Workforce Development to Child Outcomes.” *Evaluation Exchange*. Vol. XI, No. 4, page 3.

⁴ Beaufort County has 20,033 in this age group; Colleton has 7,866; Jasper has 4,042; and Hampton has 4,480.

⁵ Ten percent of respondents (4) indicated they have over 40 frontline youth workers in the summer. To be conservative, we counted only the minimum number (40) for each of the four to arrive at the total 445 frontline youth worker figure.

⁶ Four respondents indicated they have over 40 frontline youth workers working during the school year. Six respondents indicated they have over 40 volunteers working during the school year. To be conservative in the count, only 40 frontline workers were counted for respondents indicating 40 and over youth workers and volunteers in their programs in order to arrive at the total frontline youth worker and volunteer figures.